



Department of Justice

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BILLY JACK FITZMORRIS CONVICTED OF ESCAPE, BANK ROBBERIES, GUN CRIMES, HOSTAGE TAKING

COLUMBUS – A United States District Court jury here today convicted Billy Jack Fitzmorris, age 35, of seven crimes committed following his escape from custody at a hospital in Youngstown on April 2, 2007. The jury convicted Fitzmorris of one count of escape, two counts of armed bank robbery, two counts of using a firearm in a crime of violence, one count of being a felon in possession of a firearm, and one count of hostage taking.

Gregory G. Lockhart, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Ohio, in conjunction with Keith L. Bennett, Special Agent in Charge, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Christopher Sadowski, Special Agent in Charge, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, U.S. Marshal Jim Wahrab, Hilliard Police Chief Rodney D. Garnett, Upper Arlington Police Chief Brian Quinn, Powell Police Chief Gary Vest, Franklin County Sheriff Jim Karnes, Delaware County Sheriff Walter Davis, Columbus Police Chief James G. Jackson, and Ohio State Highway Patrol Colonel Richard H. Collins, announced the verdict handed down today at the conclusion of a trial that began September 11 before United States District Judge Gregory L. Frost.

Fitzmorris faces a possible maximum sentence of 25 years for each of the bank robberies, a mandatory 25 years on each of the gun charges consecutive to any other sentence, up to 10 years imprisonment for possessing a firearm, up to five years imprisonment for escape, and up to life imprisonment for the hostage taking. Judge Frost will set a date for sentencing.

Fitzmorris robbed the First Citizens National Bank on Sawmill Parkway in Powell carrying a .38 caliber Smith and Wesson revolver taken from a corrections officer during Fitzmorris' escape from the hospital, and later that day robbing the Ohio Savings Bank on Lane Avenue in Upper Arlington with the same weapon.

Fitzmorris then fled to a business in Hilliard where he took a hostage before a standoff with law enforcement officers and agents. Fitzmorris was arrested after the standoff was resolved and has been in custody since his arrest.

"The cooperative efforts of federal state and local law enforcement helped quickly end a one-day crime spree across the state," Lockhart said. "Twenty-six witnesses testified during the trial, including 11 of Fitzmorris' victims, who spoke of the ordeal they suffered.

Lockhart commended the cooperative investigation by the agencies mentioned above, along with the Youngstown offices of ATF and the Marshals Service, the Youngstown Police and other federal state and local agencies, and Assistant U.S. Attorney Kevin W. Kelley, who prosecuted the case.